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Press Release

CONSUMER SAFETY ADVISORY

Friday May 26, 2006

In Cooperation with the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission, Attorney General Darrell McGraw Urges "SAFETY FIRST" as swimming pools prepare to open for the summer over Memorial Day Weekend.

With Memorial Day weekend just around the corner, many consumers are preparing to open their pools for the season. As consumers get ready for summer fun, Attorney General Darrell McGraw is once again working with the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) to warn about the increase in drowning deaths reported in inexpensive, inflatable pools, and again reminding parents and caregivers to take several precautions to protect children from drowning hazards in all types of pools.

"Safety must come first when enjoying a backyard pool," Attorney General Darrell McGraw said, "Barriers, safety covers and electronic monitors should be used to ensure everyone's well being."

CPSC staff is working with the voluntary standards group ASTM International, consumer safety groups, retailers and inflatable pool manufacturers to develop safety standards for these products. Some local jurisdictions already require barriers for larger inflatable pools.

To reduce the risk of drowning, the Attorney General and the CPSC recommends layers of protection, including barriers, such as a fence with self-closing, self-latching gates completely surrounding pools to prevent unsupervised access by young children. If the house forms a side of the barrier, use alarms on doors leading to the pool area or a power safety cover over the pool.

It is important to always be prepared for an emergency by having rescue equipment and a phone near the pool. Also, all parents should learn cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

CPSC reports there are about 280 drowning deaths of children younger than 5 each year in swimming pools, and an estimated 2,100 children were treated in hospital emergency rooms for pool submersion injuries in 2005 – mostly in residential pools.

"Swimming pools and summer fun go hand in hand," McGraw continued, "However, the dangers associated with swimming pools are sometimes underestimated and our most vulnerable little citizens are the ones who fall victim to drowning accidents."

CPSC has reports of 17 drowning deaths involving inflatable pools in 2005, up from nine in 2004 and 10 in 2003. Small inflatable pools, about 2-feet deep, can cost as little as \$50, and larger pools, up to 4-feet deep and 18-feet wide, can cost under \$200. These pools often fall outside of local building codes that require barriers, and may often be purchased by consumers without considering the barriers necessary to help protect young children from the dangers of pools.

Many drowning deaths occur when young children are not expected to be near the pool area. In a CPSC study, almost 70 percent of the victims were last seen in the house or nearby on a porch or in the yard before the incident. Drowning can occur in the few minutes it takes to answer the phone. About 77 percent of the victims had been missing for 5 minutes or less when they were found. Precious time is often wasted looking for missing children anywhere but in the pool. Since every second counts, always look for a missing child in the pool first.

Parents may think that if their child falls in the water, they will hear lots of splashing and screaming, and that they will be able to come to the rescue. Many times, however, children slip under the water silently. Even people near the pool report hearing

nothing out of the ordinary.

McGraw concluded, "Our children are our future and as parents we have the duty to keep them safe."

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Use the following links to find additional information regarding swimming pool safety. Adobe Acrobat Reader is required to view these files.

<http://www.wvago.us/publication/poolsafety-2006.pdf>

<http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/5101.pdf>

<http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/pool.pdf>

<http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/359.pdf>

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